

WAYS OF MAKING A HUMAN OTHERWISE: AFTER-ETHNOGRAPHY WITH MIGRANT LABOURERS IN ITALIAN AGRO-INDUSTRIAL ENCLAVES

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Abstract: The paper addresses the ways in which the management of migration and of migrant labour, with particular reference to Italian agro-industrial enclaves, has relied upon forms of de-humanisation, whose targets (mainly West African migrants) identify as forms of animalisation. Manhunts and lynchings are the crudest forms of such violent exclusions, which however also manifest in more subtle and generalised patterns, characteristic of the humanitarian regime of migration management itself. Against what, drawing on Derrida and Vaughan Williams, I term «zoopolitical» violence, I consider the emergence — in the slums of agro-industrial enclaves where West African workers live — of relations between humans and animals that flag the possibility of a human or animal being treated in an equivalent way. Such reflections are the result of a protracted engagement in these settings, founded on a form of participant observation which aims not at neutral description and analysis, in the ethnographic mould, but at actively supporting and elaborating alternative futures. To do so, the notions of *anthropos* and *ethnos* which have informed anthropological scholarship since its inception also need to be radically rethought, precisely through engagement with other ways of making and being human.

Keywords: zoopolitics; after-ethnography; human-ness.

Resumo: O artigo aborda as maneiras pelas quais a gestão da migração e do trabalho migrante, com particular referência aos enclaves agroindustriais italianos, se tem baseado em formas de desumanização, cujos alvos (principalmente migrantes da África Ocidental) são identificados com formas de animalização. «Caça ao homem» e linchamentos são as formas mais cruéis dessas exclusões violentas, que, no entanto, também se manifestam em padrões mais sutis e generalizados, característicos do regime humanitário do próprio sistema de gestão das migrações. Contra o que, baseando-me em Derrida e Vaughan Williams, chamo

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violência «zoopolítica», considero o surgimento — nas favelas de enclaves agroindustriais onde vivem @s trabalhador@s da África Ocidental — de relações entre humanos e animais que sinalizam a possibilidade de um ser humano (e animal) serem tratados de modo equivalente. Tais reflexões são o resultado de um engajamento prolongado nesses cenários, baseado numa forma de observação participante que visa não a descrição e análise neutras, segundo o modelo etnográfico, mas apoiar e elaborar ativamente futuros alternativos. Para fazer isso, as noções de *anthropos* e *ethnos* que informaram os estudos antropológicos desde a sua criação também precisam de ser radicalmente repensadas, precisamente através do empenhamento noutras maneiras de criar o ser humano e de se viver como tal.

Palavras-chave: zoopolítica; after-ethnography; humanidade.

This intervention, and more broadly the work underlying it, is born out of a sense of urgency for new ways of making — that necessarily also go with ways of unmaking, or more bluntly of actively destroying and taking apart. Specifically, I wish to make visible, and further, a process of struggle *on the edges of the human*, for the latter's remaking and reinhabiting — a process in which knowledge production plays a fundamental role, and is itself a site of struggle. I do so from a partial, contingent and situated position, the one from which I have been conducting engaged, fieldwork-based participant observation since 2012.

Geographically, the scope of my analysis encompasses several agro-industrial enclaves in different locations across Italy. My engagement has taken place particularly in two open-field farming districts, those of the so-called Tavoliere (which belongs to the district of Foggia, in the upper part of the south-eastern Apulia Region) and of the Plain of Gioia Tauro, in the district of Reggio Calabria (the southernmost province of mainland Italy). Tavoliere, or Capitanata, is the second largest stretch of arable land in Italy after the northern Po valley. Its farming industry is devoted to a gamut of produce, which has progressively expanded from a traditional vocation to wheat (and now largely abandoned, transhumant sheep pastures) towards a number of seasonal, labour-intensive crops: mostly vegetables (with industrial tomato as the lead cultivation, both of the round and the long variety), olives and grapes. The Plain of Gioia Tauro, on the other hand, represents one of the main districts for citrus-fruit cultivation in the country (with olive groves also playing an important role), although it is now increasingly seeking reconversion towards higher-added-value, fruit-tree growing — which entails also the ever more common practice of felling citrus groves to the ground. Again, these are labour-intensive crops which demand highly seasonal patterns of work.

A corridor made of seasonal migration flows stretches between the two enclaves, and some others too, such as the area around Metaponto, towards the Ionian coast of the Basilicata Region; the so-called Terra di Lavoro, around the city of Caserta, just north of Naples, which acts as the main hub for all such seasonal movements, being a point of reference especially for West African migrants; or the north-western district of Cuneo, in Piedmont, particularly around the town of Saluzzo, thus the same workers in many

cases alternate between one and the other according to seasonal labour requirements and opportunities: winter for citrus, spring and summer for peach and vegetables, autumn for olives, grapes and other fruit (particularly apple and kiwi). Both districts are among the most emblematic examples of a system of management — of agro-industrial production in general, and of the workforce and its mobility in particular — that was progressively restructured through interrelated processes of zoning and of global supply-chain integration. In turn, these had externalisation effects at various levels, which ultimately dumps costs on workers, especially when migrants, as the weakest links in the chain¹.

In managing the workforce and re-organising agro-industrial production, specific articulations, and more poignantly recursive forms of denial, of the human have arguably played a crucial role. In all Italian agro-industrial districts, since the 1970s (time when these processes of restructuring were set in motion) the majority of the «unskilled»², and especially the seasonal, workforce, has been progressively (if not entirely) substituted. Where previously made of locals or of internal migrants and often highly feminised, subsequent waves of international migrants — from Northern Africa and Albania first, then from sub-Saharan Africa, the Indian sub-continent and Eastern Europe have significantly modified its composition, parallel to profound changes in the forms of work itself. In this context, processes of zoning have been operating not just to (dis)integrate individual farms into agro-industrial districts, at the mercy of large distribution companies, processing industries and their middlemen, but also to confine and sort their migrant workforce along racialised and/or ethnicised lines (which are always also gendered) that fracture and hierarchise a supposedly selfsame «human» community. Partially new forms of discrimination, of exclusion or of «differential inclusion»³, have built on and remodelled old ones, which at least since the mid-19th century had constructed uncouth, ignorant, poor day labourers, especially if southerners, as racially and culturally inferior⁴.

In fact, the puncturing and fracturing of an allegedly universal «human» condition respond to an exclusionary logic which has been the constitutive cipher of humanism itself ever since the 17th century, and thus from the very birth of the Enlightenment's

¹ PEANO, 2019.

² The workforce is here categorised as unskilled by definition, within a bureaucratic as much as a more broadly cultural discourse, whilst of course not only a series of complex skills is required to live and work in these contexts, but in some cases the labour performed by farm workers would legally qualify as highly skilled (I am thinking for example of tasks such as pruning, performed by many workers for the lowest legal wages, corresponding to non-skilled jobs, or even below the minimum, but technically categorised as highly skilled). Indeed, this is a conflict over the valuation of ways of making.

³ MEZZADRA & NEILSON, 2013.

⁴ For an overview of the dynamics of internal racialisation that have operated in Italy since its unification in 1861, see SCHNEIDER, 1998; and LOMBARDI-DIOP & ROMEO, 2012, for the postcolonial ramifications of such patterns of racialisation.

«Man»⁵, if not earlier⁶. Racial/ethnic/national (but also gender/sexual) qualifiers operate through legal, media, and popular discourses, which materialise in multiple forms: spatial arrangements that act as differential forms of containment and sociability; subjective/affective dispositions that mark relations, representations, entitlements and vulnerabilities; wildly unequal forms of resource distribution predicated on such dispositions, discourses and institutional frames. In the contexts at hand, migrants in agro-industrial enclaves are segregated in slums, labour camps, asylum seekers' reception centres, abandoned farmhouses or overcrowded apartments without basic utilities. Whilst arrangements vary according to place and the specific category to which migrants are assigned (asylum seeker, EU citizen, undocumented alien, etc.), segregation and impoverished forms of dwelling are the norm across the spectrum. Legal barriers regulating migration — both from outside and inside the EU/Schengen space — and access to municipal residency registries, together with their selective, arbitrary application operate to produce and reinforce such composite boundaries.

In Capitanata as well as in the Plain of Gioia Tauro, West-African migrants employed in the agricultural sector (and in related occupations) may live in asylum-seeker reception centres (of which the largest is located some few kilometres from the city of Foggia, nearby a small Fascist-era rural settlement called Borgo Mezzanone); in large or small self-constructed slums and hybrid settlements, partly sponsored by governments themselves (a sprawling shantytown has been growing around the fenced perimeter of the same reception centre in Borgo Mezzanone, but examples abound); in abandoned rural settlements, built at the time of the agrarian reform of 1950 (such as the mostly Ghanaian hamlet of Tretitoli, near the town of Cerignola) or of the Fascist-era land-reclamation projects that are scattered across the Tavoliere; in purposefully built labour camps (such as the high-security tent camp erected in the summer of 2017 in the Industrial Area of San Ferdinando, adjacent to the port of Gioia Tauro); in empty warehouses; or in spaces which cannot be easily categorised as one or the other, but which display features of many. Following partially different trajectories and arrangements, Eastern European workers (mostly from Romania and Bulgaria) reside either in slums (especially if they are of Roma origins, as it is often the case), in abandoned farm — or warehouses or in overcrowded flats, shacks, and containers arranged by farmers or intermediaries. In all cases, only those workers who, after many years and some luck, are able to gain some stability (working for the same farmer, with a labour contract and thus, in the case of non-EU migrants, with legal right to residency) can hope to find rented accommodation in one of the (agro)towns or villages that dot both enclaves. If, that is, landlords agree to rent their property to «blacks», «Africans», «immigrants» — and

⁵ FOUCAULT, 1970; MCKITTRICK, 2015; REES, 2018.

⁶ AGAMBEN, 2002.

often they do not, as it emerges from the tales of many prospective tenants, especially if single men.

Taken together, the two macro-communities (of West Africans and Eastern Europeans) make up the largest proportion of farm workers in both districts⁷. Whilst forms of discrimination, segregation and racism affect both, here I wish to focus specifically on the dynamics of de-humanisation that invest primarily West-African migrants, both on account of my longer-term engagement with this group of workers and on the fact that they arguably undergo specific forms of othering predicated on their blackness.

MANHUNTS, ZOOPOLITICS AND THEIR HUMANITARIAN SHADOW

Perhaps the most vivid, appalling and dramatic instance of de-humanisation that (especially African) migrants suffer, in Italian agro-industrial enclaves as in the rest of the country, is epitomised by the acts of violence they frequently undergo for the mere fact of being black. Whilst this is hardly a new phenomenon (having been documented for as long as African immigration started in significant numbers in the late 1970s), roughly since the weeks preceding the last general election in early March 2018, and throughout the year, an upsurge in such incidents was reported, denoting a renewed attention to the phenomenon if not an actual rise in quantitative terms — which is not only hard to ascertain but also beside the point of my reflections⁸.

As far as agro-industrial enclaves are concerned, the first and perhaps the most (in)famous recorded episode of what effectively counts as an act of lynching happened in August 1989 in Villa Literno, in the district of Caserta, where Jerry Masslo, a south-African anti-apartheid activist who had been denied the right to asylum in Italy, was murdered in cold blood whilst his fellow farm workers, all African, were wounded by gunshots. The victims were living in an abandoned country house and were employed in the tomato harvest⁹. In the same area, in 2008 six West African men were also shot dead by mobsters of one of the rivalling Camorra gangs who wished to send an intimidatory

⁷ The latest available official estimates, referring to 2017 and based on the number of people registered in the municipal farmworkers' lists, speak of around 20.000 migrant farm workers employed in Capitanata and of about 6.500 in the Plain of Gioia Tauro (MAGRINI, 2018). About half of these are from Eastern Europe, whilst the number of West African migrants is harder to aggregate but can be estimated to be around 6000 for Tavoliere and 3-4.000 for the Plain of Gioia Tauro.

⁸ For a (very partial) reconstruction of the first instances of racist violence and murder, see <<https://www.internazionale.it/opinione/igiaba-scego/2016/07/07/omicidio-fermo-razzismo-italia>>. For (again very cursory) chronologies of the most recent incidents, see <<http://hatecrime.osce.org/italy>>; <<https://www.radicali.it/cronologia-aggressioni-razziste-da-inizio-giugno-ad-oggi/>>; <<https://www.lunaria.org/il-razzismo-nel-2018-on-line-il-nostro-nuovo-focus/>>; for the 2007-2009 period, see ANDRISANI & NALETTO, 2009. These are problematic in a number of respects, not least because official figures often downplay aggressions, failing to recognize their racist motivations. Furthermore, no aggregated data is officially collected in Italy about such episodes of racist-inflected violence.

⁹ For a more thorough treatment of the episode and its implications for anti-racist struggles in Italy, allow me to refer to an older piece of mine (PEANO, 2017).

message to the entire community. In this case, and unlike most others, the judiciary recognised racial motivations underlying the indiscriminate shooting of black people simply based on the colour of their skin. Just as in the case of Jerry Masslo and of other similar attacks that had happened in the area between 1986 and 1990, the 2008 mass shooting also led to a revolt by the local African community and, to some extent, to acts of solidarity from Italian citizens too.

In the 2000s, in Rosarno (the main town in the Plain of Gioia Tauro), black migrants were also targeted by racist aggressions, and again revolted (once in 2008 and then in 2010). Currently, African people living in the area, mainly in camps and slums, also report repeated attacks (usually perpetrated by motorists who attempt to run them over or club them from their cars, mostly at night, but also in broad daylight and by groups of white men on foot. Since the beginning of 2019 three lifeless black bodies have been found in Rosarno, whose deaths are shrouded in mystery: once again, they appear to have been killed for no reason. In the meantime, in 2016, Sekine Traoré, a Malian resident of the slum of San Ferdinando, later razed to the ground by the authorities, was shot dead by a *carabiniere* who had been called by Sekine's fellow inhabitants to calm him down, after a row had broken out during which he had had a fit and lost control. The law enforcement agent allegedly felt threatened by a man on the ground, who, whilst wielding a small kitchen knife, was being held by several other slum dwellers. In 2018, Soumaila Sacko, another resident of the now extinguished shantytown, was gunned down and killed by the owner of a former cement factory (long confiscated by the judiciary because of severe irregularities), where the young man, also from Mali, was scavenging for shack-building material together with others, who were also shot and wounded.

Similarly, in October 2015 three men were shot in the back, and one, Mamadou Sare, killed, in a field near Foggia, by the owner of a farm and his son, who had hunted them down for several miles (chasing them from their car, whilst the young men were running) allegedly because they had seen them stealing some (discarded) melons from the ground in their property. A demonstration by his fellow workers and slum dwellers took place a few days after the incident. In the month of July of 2019, at least four violent attacks were reported by several African workers that live in an abandoned milk factory in the outskirts of the city of Foggia, who in the wee hours of the morning, whilst riding their bicycles or scooters to work, were stoned or run over. One of them was hospitalised and nearly lost sight in his right eye, after being hit by a stone. Two young men were later arrested on charges of aggression related to those incidents, and are currently awaiting trial. Finally, 51-year-old Daniel Nyarko, the latest victim in this (certainly partial) list of horrors, was shot dead in March 2019 in front of the farmhouse where he lived with his partner near Borgo Mezzanone. The initial version of the incident, provided by law enforcement agents, spoke of «a brawl among migrants» — which, as it later turned

out, had indeed taken place, but several miles away from the scene of the murder and between people of other nationalities. However, Daniel's close friends speculated that he was killed as retaliation. Some years previously he had had several people arrested, whom he had caught trying to steal some agricultural machinery from the owner of the farm for which he worked as watchman. Also in this case, his skin colour and origin certainly granted for harsher punishment, as a disposable, subhuman body. His employer refused not only to provide any form of support and compensation to Daniel's relatives, but also to correspond his overdue wages to his (Nigerian) partner, who, adding insult to injury, was drawn out of the house.

In his philosophical study of manhunts, which spans rather large spatiotemporal scales, ranging from ancient Greece to 19th century United States, through Biblical (mythical) times, Medieval and Modern Europe, Grégoire Chamayou¹⁰ makes the point that these practices are not only foundational to what one could label Western politics (in a mode which he tags as «cynetic sovereignty»), but that they are predicated on a double movement, of expulsion from a common order and thence, by virtue of such prior expulsion, of capture. The manhunt is an act of domination, one which draws particular pleasure from the ambivalent humanity of the prey, at the same time denied *and* recognised¹¹.

Indeed, West-African migrants living in slum-camps regularly portray — at the same time emphatically contesting — their inferiorisation as a form of animalisation. «They treat us like animals, we blacks — are we not human?», is a ubiquitous refrain heard at times of indignation, whether collective or individual (cf. Figure 1). Equally, some farm owners refer to their African workers as «beasts». Yet, beyond a reaction against explicit acts of violence, and to life in the slums and work in the farms, animalisation for those who live it on their skin and in their flesh, and protest against it, refers also to the kind of treatment enforced through the very humanitarian regime which encroaches upon migrant subjects ever since the start of their journeys, through Niger and Libya, across the Mediterranean, and then in the various spaces of containment (and confinement) to which they are relegated — from *hotspots*, hubs and asylum-seeker reception centres to labour camps that merge into slums, and ultimately also prisons and migrant detention centres¹².

¹⁰ CHAMAYOU, 2012.

¹¹ On a related point, with particular reference to the duplicitous status of US slaves in the antebellum south, as both objects *and* persons, cf. also HARTMAN, 1997.

¹² As far as administrative detention is concerned, in relation to animalisation cf. <https://www.borderline-europe.de/sites/default/files/features/2014_Final_brochure_at-the-limen.pdf>, p. 24-25; <<https://ilmanifesto.it/la-denuncia-di-un-ragazzo-detenuto-nel-cpr-di-corso-brunelleschi-a-torino-la-situazione-e-molto-peggio-di-quello-che-credete/>>; <<https://www.fanpage.it/attualita/morto-nel-cpr-di-torino-un-detenuto-ho-denunciato-lo-stupro-ma-nessuno-e-intervenuto/>>.



Figure 1. A placard held by a protester during a spontaneous demonstration which erupted after the killing of Sekine Traoré by a law enforcement agent (carabiniere) in the tent-camp turned slum of San Ferdinando, Calabria.

The banner reads: «Italy there is much racism! Why did carabinieri kill us? Carabinieri!

In Italy there are no laws between Italians and foreigners. We are not like animals! We are people!».

Following Derrida¹³, Vaughan-Williams¹⁴ identifies the operations of a «zoopolitical» border as «the constitutive outside of humanitarian discourses, the application of human rights, and the citizen as the «proper» human subject in spaces of animalisation across Europe» (2). Animalisation, in other words, «is a necessary condition of possibility for humanitarianism» (3). However, whilst this very much resonates with the protestations of the slum-camp dwellers with whom I have worked and shared struggles for many years, I would argue that the border between the humanitarian and the zoopolitical is far more complex and blurred, for in the name of humanity some of the worst abuses, which these same subjects oppose, have been perpetrated and interpreted as acts of animalisation by those undergoing them.

Aside from the quasi-carceral conditions of asylum-seeker reception centres, mass-scale evictions have been repeatedly framed by government authorities as «humanitarian» operations, resulting not only in the loss of dwellings, income and sociality for hundreds of people, but in some cases in the death of some of the slum inhabitants. Such was the fate of two young men (Mamadou Konaté and Nuhu Doumbia) during the police dismantlement of a place known as Grand Ghetto, some 10 km from Foggia, in March 2017, when a large fire developed that killed them in their sleep.

¹³ DERRIDA, 2009.

¹⁴ VAUGHAN-WILLIAMS, 2015.

More recently, since the beginning of 2019, a piecemeal operation tellingly named «*Law and Humanity*» (in English) has been progressively bulldozing shacks and houses in another such large settlement, known as Mexico by its inhabitants, where in fact some of the evicted dwellers of the Grand Ghetto had found refuge. Similarly, the «humanitarian alternative» to slums has always consisted in what turn out to be equally inhuman(e) container and tent camps, which easily turn into slums. In the allegedly high-security tent camp that, by government fiat, finally replaced previous tent-camps-turned slums in San Ferdinando, a fire developed in March 2019 that killed yet another young man, Noumou Sylla.

«Humanitarian reason», that profoundly unequal form of government analysed by Fassin¹⁵ as a compassionate politics of precarious lives, that does not exclude repression, might indeed entail necropolitical forms of animalisation as the underside of an ever unsteady and dubious compassion. After all, as Hartman¹⁶ argued, even when the enslavement (and thus the objectification) of Africans was institutionally recognised, the law's attribution of a residual humanity to the slave acted to intensify «the brutal exercise of power upon the captive body rather than ameliorating the chattel condition» (5).

At the same time, just as the human is punctured and fractured, but also infested, by racist and exclusionary logics, African migrants identify a mirror operation at play in relation to animality. Whilst some humans are animalised, pets are humanised. «Italians treat their dogs better than us», they contend; «dogs owned by Italian people cannot live how we do. Even they are given houses»; «Salvini [the previous, notoriously anti-migrant Minister of Internal Affairs] even passed a law to protect dogs» — as indeed he did, as well as worrying about the fate of the stray dogs from the asylum-seeker reception centre of Mineo, in the district of Catania, Sicily, which was recently closed down by his ministry's decree. In the summer of 2019, the Minister's concern for stray dogs was taken up by a group of people preoccupied with the future of the dozens of animals sharing their living space with the inhabitants of the asylum-seeker reception centre (CARA) in Borgo Mezzanone, Foggia. Worried that these animals would have no place to stay after the announced the evacuation of the centre, they started a Facebook page named CARABau to find «a new home» for them, and especially for those dogs who, according to the promoters, were the object of abuse from the centre's hosts. Apart from this instance, no mention is made of the latter or of the inhabitants of the large shantytown that sprawls around it, who not only are themselves going to lose «their home», but are also, in many cases, actively tending to the dogs themselves, who from this point of view are indeed not «stray» at all. Indeed, by way of a conclusion, I wish to suggest ways in

¹⁵ FASSIN, 2012.

¹⁶ HARTMAN, 1997.

which the human-animal dyad might be re-assembled in less exclusionary forms, which also interrogate the role of (post)humanist disciplines such as anthropology.

OF DOGS, REFUGEES AND OPEN-ENDED PROCESSES OF HUMAN EMERGENCE, AFTER ETHNOS

The elaboration of their condition as a form of animalisation, a constant refrain for African migrants subjected to forms of violent dehumanisation in agro-industrial enclaves, might be taken as underscoring a discourse of human exceptionalism. Yet, I would argue that the relations which these subjects establish with their nonhuman companions bespeak partially alternative conceptualisations that do not square with the dominant forms of the human that also exclude them. One specific interaction crystallised this potential for me, during a visit I paid to a household that hosts several workers (both men and women) in a hamlet in the district of Foggia. Entering the fenced courtyard I and my fellow visitors were greeted by a small, grey-and-white furred dog, whose «owner», the household head and the senior figure in the whole settlement, immediately proceeded to call off as an act of courtesy, in order to deliver us from a supposed encumbrance: «Refugee!» he shouted. Stunned by the appellation, I inquired about the choice of name for the dog. «One day he appeared into the courtyard», his human friend explained, «and wouldn't leave. So after some time, we decided to give him *five years* and let him stay». Ample laughter followed from all sides.



Figure 2. Refugee, the dog. Borgo Tretitoli (Foggia).

The mocking, mimetic reference to the asylum system, which entails the granting of five-year-long residency permits to successful applicants, brought into relief for me an attitude that, through irony, overturned the hierarchies between human and animal, and thus also, by implication, between humans themselves. Being treated «like dogs» (or worse) by fellow humans, in a system in which many are denied not only refugee status but also lesser forms of protection and recognition, did not imply these subjects'

own mistreatment of animals, on the contrary: in their ironic but real, alternative order, nobody, human or not, should be denied the right to stay. In a slight twist to the same logic, in the temporary tent-camp that was set up in the Industrial Area of San Ferdinando after the eviction of an abandoned warehouse, and which subsequently hosted for some time those who had lost their homes in the final demolition of the adjacent slum, a man called his dog: «Salvini!». Whilst the appellative in this case was an index of the dog's penchant for misbehaviour, it nonetheless carried, at one and the same time, a sense of depreciation for the Minister after whom he was baptised, and of affection for the animal, with whom the man was used to play. The animal version of the Minister could become a playmate, a life companion, once brought to the same level as its African friend. All African worker slums proliferate with dogs and cats, normally fed and cared for by their inhabitants, who in some cases even buy special dog feed for them. If people do refer to a few of the animals as «theirs», this entails less a sense of entitlement and domination than a special form of friendship and attachment. Many bear Italian names (Sara, Paolo...), building a sort of tongue-in-cheek connection with people that those who chose the names do not often have the chance of befriending; or names that recall cherished people or places (such as «Africa»). Dogs are adopted purely as friends; they keep being «stray» even when they are somebody's. Like all relations in the slums, these are borne of displacements. Not unlike many other settings, the slums — as spaces which are structurally outside or on the fringes of humanitarian government — thus also emerge as places in which alternative conceptions of the human, and of its constitutive other, may take shape, endure or even thrive despite great hardship and their mainstream representation as spaces of perdition, oppression and misery.

The human-animal relationships fostered in these spaces are perhaps among the most vivid, and certainly the most neglected, examples of what alternative conceptions of the human might look like, if they are by no means the sole ones. The slums that dot agro-industrial enclaves are, therefore, a powerful epitome of what, after Tobias Rees¹⁷, I would call an *after ethnos*: spaces where ruptures and mutations of established conceptions of the human emerge, which can be rendered visible by an analysis of how instances of the here and now «derail and defy the normative conceptions of the human (or other things, really) that are silently transported by the analytical concepts on which anthropology thus far has relied» (41). This means exposing oneself and one's analytical categories, and focusing on emergence. Anthropology's questioning capacity is borne not of detached reflection but, necessarily, of active and open engagement with the world, which in turn leads to a transformation of the predicates of being¹⁸. Participant observation is «a potentially revolutionary praxis»¹⁹. Deconstructing the anthropos and

¹⁷ TOBIAS REES, 2018.

¹⁸ INGOLD, 2014, 2017.

¹⁹ SHAH, 2017.

the ethnos inherent to the discipline, and to the culture which gave rise to it and is still very much with us, also means engaging in a process of transformation and actively fostering the emergence of an human otherwise.

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